**Do you see any glimmer of hope in the candidacy of Bernie Sanders for the revival of the American left?**

Yes maybe, but it really depends on what happens to the movement that has coalesced around the Sanders presidency after the primary and general election. I think the real long-term significance of the Sanders campaign for the potential renewal of the US left is not necessarily whether he wins the election – though, clearly, that could also be important in and of itself. But, rather, whether his campaign acts as a further catalyst for and expansion of the kinds of broader-based grassroots organizing from below that has played such an important role in the campaign; and, moreover, that it could do so in a way that is both more self-sustaining than many previous left-wing movements and, even more importantly, moves beyond the politics of the ballot-box. I mean, any sober critical analysis of Sander's actual policy positions shows that he's really just an old school New Deal Democrat. Indeed, in the political context of the 1950s and 60s, he would have been considered a moderate Democrat. But, since the reconstruction of Democratic Party inaugurated by the New Clintonian Democrats of 1990s, he's now viewed as something of a radical, which he – unlike many others on the 'progressive' wing of the Democrat Party – more or less embraces by describing himself as a 'democratic socialist' (i.e. Scandinavian-style Social Democrat).

So while his policy positions are surely better and more to the left than a Hilary Clinton or most other center-right New Democrats, the real hope in his candidacy for revitalizing the American left – and, in particular, small 'c' communist or socialist politics – is the possible longer-term effects it could have on both generalizing and consolidating grassroots politics from below that operates within and outside electoral politics while shifting the broader political discourse to the left. I think the Sanders campaign has already more or less achieved the latter effect, though we'll see whether it can bring about the former. One promising sign that it might, is that Sanders and his campaign has time and again articulated a case for continuing to build a grassroots movement from below with the aim to put pressure on whoever the next President might be. I think this is a very important argument, and it does somewhat distinguish Sanders' campaign from previous 'left-wing populist' presidential bids like Howard Dean in 2004 or Dennis Kucinich in 2004 and 2008. But, if Sanders loses the primary election and then turns around and says, 'hey, it was a great run, but I lost so now everyone go out and campaign for Clinton' and that's it, then he'll likely squander a huge opportunity in rebuilding the US left.

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# Benno Teschke, *Rethinking International Relations*

*The interview conducted by George Souvlis and Aurélie Andry.*

**How would you situate your trajectory in the broader intellectual and political contexts of West Germany?**

I went to a Franciscan Gymnasium in small-town Western Germany and when you were born, like me, in the late 1960s and had some left-leaning inclinations, your intellectual formation and path to Marxism was likely to be strongly influenced by the Frankfurt School – as it was in my case. It was actually the works of the earlier Frankfurt School that fascinated me, the books that were more historically and sociologically grounded doing more political analysis as classically understood rather than philosophy or cultural theory: partly Franz Neumann and Otto Kirchheimer on fascism, and partly Jürgen Habermas's early work on *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, even though I grew very quickly dissatisfied with Habermas's later work. To sustain and deepen my interests in political economy and historical sociology I turned then more directly to Marx's own work, but always felt that the theoretical structure of *Das Kapital* – the historical chapters apart – and the body of literature that goes by the name of Kapital-Logik or, more recently, the "New Dialectics," remained ultimately sterile – an exercise in dialectical abstractions of a purely conceptual nature that had left real history largely behind. Still, the engagement with the Frankfurt School and Western Marxism more broadly left me with strong anti-positivistic convictions and, if you want, a dialectical sensitivity as to my conception of the conduct of social science.

Substantively, much of the academic debate in Western Germany – on the left and on the right – was still transfixed on the German catastrophe and the Holocaust, and this became also my first intellectual "problematic." But rather than looking at the culture industry or grand philosophical narratives of the "Dialectic of the Enlightenment," I felt initially more drawn towards the left-liberal Bielefeld School – people like Hans-Ulrich Wehler and Jürgen Kocka – who grounded the Nazi experience in Germany's peculiar long-term trajectory of

socio-economic development and state-formation, anchoring its deviance from presumed Western European standard paths in the "failed" 1848 "bourgeois revolution."The debate in the late 1980s between them and David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley's position set out in *The Peculiarities of German History* caught my interest and convinced me of the virtues of social history and historical sociology. Yet, even though this controversy demonstrated the richness of social history, it largely abstracted from the geopolitical contexts that affected the German 19th century experience. It thus exacerbated the ideological gulfs and limited points of emphasis between social historians and classical Neo-Rankeans (internalists versus externalists) at the time – divisions over the primacy of domestic relations or the primacy of foreign policy – and led me to ask what Marx and the wider Marxist tradition had to say about political geography and international relations so that external relations could be internalized into a revised Marxist perspective.

In this context – we are approaching the early 1990s – I became more and more aware that there was no distinct tradition of historical sociology left in Western Germany, broadly defined, that could re-inform Marxism, partly because many Weimar historical sociologists had emigrated, and perhaps partly because this genre of scholarship had become discredited by the more orthodox East-German literature. This was a very peculiar phenomenon, really, given that sociology, historical sociology, is par excellence basically a German invention, deriving its greatest impulses from the great German and Austrian classics: from the German Historical School and the Methodenstreit of the 1880s to Weber, Schumpeter and Polanyi, and of course Marx and Engels themselves. That discourse, in a way, had with very few exceptions – Heide Gerstenberger's work springs to mind – migrated outside of Germany by the late 1980s, early 1990s. Simultaneously, I was struck when I studied in the 1990s in France and Britain that the very same academic register that was on the verge of extinction in Germany was here fully alive – in France through the Annales School (Marc Bloch and Fernand Braudel) and in Britain through the great Marxist historians (Eric Hobsbawm, E.P. Thompson, Perry Anderson, etc.). In fact, the discipline of historical sociology had been revived and rehabilitated in Anglo-American academia, if decidedly in a non-Marxist fashion, during the 1980s and 1990s in the writings of Charles Tilly, Theda Skocpol, and Michael Mann. So, I would say that by the early 1990s a certain problematic was starting to crystallize which I would broadly call a search for a Marxist international historical sociology. I was looking for something like that.

While I was doing my doctoral work in the Department of International Relations at the LSE to pursue this theme, I came across the work of Robert Brenner and Ellen Meiksins Wood and in many ways this was an inspiration. I consider this literature a real breakthrough, in particular the "Transition Debate" on the rise of capitalism in late medieval England, because I think that it is rare to find Marxists that really step outside their comfort zones, outside the core categories and assumptions which derive often from more or less deeply held orthodox convictions, and to engage history in open-minded, innovative and rigorous ways by taking historiographical research seriously. I wanted to see how I could use Brenner's work in order to think through and further historicize political geography and international relations. So I think that is essentially what brought me to my own work, i.e. drawing out the implications of the "Transition Debate" for historicizing international relations and developing Political Marxism for International Historical Sociology in the process.

**You are one of the main initiators of the Political Marxism Research Group at the University of Sussex. What are the aims of this research group and how do you position yourselves in relation to the tradition of Political Marxism?**

The aim of the Political Marxism Working Group is to provide a platform to not only passively rely on the first generation of Political Marxists, but also to try to develop the research program and theoretical commitments in new directions and in productive ways.

One problem that distinguishes different tendencies within Political Marxism – what may be called PM 1 and PM 2 – is the need to explore the unresolved tension between a residual structuralism encapsulated in the category of social property relations and its logically derived "rules of reproduction," and the simultaneous adherence to a strong historicism, which centers social conflict, class agency, and unintended consequences. Samuel Knafo and I speak to this problem in our paper, "The Rules of Reproduction of Capitalism: A Historicist Critique." This tension, we think, has led over time to an ideal-typified conception of capitalism in PM 1, defined as "market-dependency," in which market imperatives seem to prescribe and auto-generate class agency – a reading also present in Charles Post and Vivek Chibbers's work.

Overcoming this relapse into a functionalist conception of class agency and an economistic understanding of the operation of capitalism (even when grounded in a distinct set of capitalist social property relations) requires what we call a stronger commitment to a radical historicism. This foregrounds agency, situated and contextualized, at all levels to retrieve a sense of the more open-ended conflicts and institutional innovations that characterize diverse trajectories of capitalism. The elementary insight is simple: if capitalism is conceived as a politically contested social relation, then we cannot conceptualize agents as acting out a pre-ordained script or logic. We need to turn our thinking around and establish what people do in the face of "imperatives" or pressures to pinpoint the difference they make as they go along reproducing themselves – often innovating in the process. We cannot conceive of agents as passive rule-followers, but as actively devising strategies of reproduction in specific contexts.

The problem, in other words, is how to conceive of capitalism not as a theoretically closed category, but as a historically open praxis. This requires a move away from general model-building towards historical specification. For me, this

pertains particularly to the issue of developing an approach to IR that does not subsume foreign policy making and diplomacy under wider structural and systemic pressures, whether grounded in reified "logics" of capitalism or reified "logics" of state rationality, but that accords efficacy to political agency on its own terms. This is not to argue for some radical state autonomy, but to take seriously the fact that agency can rarely be fully resolved back into contextual imperatives or antecedent conditions, as people tend to innovate in unpredictable ways to respond to, circumvent, and escape from such pressures. History is then not conceived as a manifestation of overarching logics or laws – a secondary register meant to confirm aprioristic abstractions and pre-conceived axioms – but itself the first-order terrain of inquiry, as people make their own history.

This type of thinking is also distinct from David Harvey's Marxist geography, which ultimately grounds the dynamics of "capital outbound" in deeply rooted systemic pressures, which require "spatial fixes" at the infra-structural level and successive rounds of "accumulation by dispossession." But this is essentially an economistic and totalizing conception of the transnationalization of capitalism without international politics, which is then re-captured *ex post* through the problematic and reified addition of a logic of power, apparently pursued by state-managers. Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system theory, at least when it was initially formed, is another example of subjecting history to grand cycles – the cycles of hegemony – and the systemic pressures of the relations between core, semi-peripheral and peripheral states. Rosenberg's current work, in turn, seems to embrace a positivistic and nomological conception of uneven and combined development as yet another overarching master concept and covering law for world history as a whole. Here, history and agency are ultimately downgraded to manifestations of a subjectless law that imposes its imperatives regardless of what people do, so that history is slotted into a few a priori omnibus categories.

I will add that Classical Marxist theories of imperialism also fell into the structural-functionalist trap, as monopoly capitalism was conceived as a system-wide stage, at least in the core European capitalist countries, which imposed its requirements on states and their foreign policies. This drastically reduced the efficacy of diplomacy and the active conduct of international politics. These theories all suffer from advancing theories of international relations without international politics and, what I come think is key, the active formulation of "grand strategies" that tell us much more about the link between domestic politics and foreign policy formation – and, ultimately, international ordering. It is this commitment to an anti-formalistic radical historicism that, to my mind, is the *differentia specifica* of our understanding of Political Marxism.

So, this is essentially our goal: trying to go beyond the original "Transition Debate" to more fully historicize capitalism and "capitalist" international relations. I am looking now more at what I want to call the political geographies of historical capitalism: how you can think about foreign policy informed by a RM



approach, emphasizing the unilateral or multilateral construction and clashes of state strategies, whose interactions often lead to unintended consequences. What I have in mind here is to take seriously the fact that the historical record of "capitalist" foreign policy – the structuring and management of spaces of capital – is so incredibly diverse: from the Peace of Utrecht that left a specific political geography on the Continent regulated by British power-balancing, via the Vienna Settlement and the Concert of Europe, the construction of the Western Hemisphere through the Monroe Doctrine, formal and informal imperialisms in the late 19th century, the American interwar strategy to break up the old empires and replace them at Versailles by pushing mini-state proliferations through the principle of "national self-determination," based on liberal and republican state forms and tied into notions of collective security, German and Japanese notions of autarchic regional orders – Carl Schmitt's "greater spaces" – to US hegemony and the European Integration Project. The political geographies of historical capitalism cannot be derived from a particular "logic of capital," either with recourse to the generic concept itself, or particular phases of capitalist development, but require a much more fine-tuned historicist approach that emphasizes their construction – rather than subsumption under some *sub specie aeternitatis* principle – be it the classical IR trope of power politics and states as security accumulators in a condition of anarchy or the classical Marxist trope of capitalist geopolitics. For what is a capitalist foreign policy supposed to be, in the abstract? So we are broadening out into other fields, into other areas while trying to theoretically refine or reformulate the early brilliant, but theoretically somewhat problematic, work of Brenner and Wood.

**Can you explain the argument of your work, The Myth of 1648, and how it challenges the reification of the Treaty of Westphalia as the founding moment of modern international relations? If Westphalia was not the founding moment of modern international relations, what does that imply in political and historical terms? What were some of the criticisms you received?**

This work came at a very propitious moment, speaking to the "historical and post-positivistic turns" in the field of IR, which, as mentioned, was at the time a very an unusual academic discipline, and very much focused on the United States. It provided – and still does in the U.S. and elsewhere – essentially strategic advice for the powers that be: advice for the Prince on matters of statecraft, or *Herrschaftswissen* (knowledge of domination) as Frankfurt School theorists would call it. Here was a whole field of academic inquiry that makes no bones about being directly subservient to state power, in which scholars moved effortlessly between university departments, think tanks, and governmental positions – all united in suggesting ways of how the United States could maintain or enhance its position at the apex of the interstate hierarchy – whether through conflict or cooperation. The result was an intellectual shallowness that struck me from the start as scandalously out of sync with all the standards of

social-scientific and historiographical inquiry.

In retrospect, I would say that I started the project with three big questions in mind: First, how could I show the historicity of political geography, the polities that compose geopolitical orders, and their "international relations" by grounding this in contested social relations? Hence the return to medieval history. This was designed to dislodge the prevailing state-centrism and historically incredibly myopic and misleading attempts of transhistorical general-theory-building in mainstream Anglo-American IR, built around anarchy, power-maximization, and power-balancing, as if foreign policy had been played out since time immemorial according to the same tune.

Second, why – and this is a more genuinely interesting question – does capitalism exist within a system of plural states and what is the historical relation between the two? This was designed to query and destabilize the assumption, held for example by Wallerstein's World-Systems-Theory, that the interstate system, the multiple political jurisdiction that splinter a capitalist space co-extensive with the world-market, is somehow the "natural" or "necessary" (geo-) political form of capitalism, causally connected to capitalist requirements – hence the need to go back to the Carolingian Empire and to track the changing political geographies of medieval and early modern Europe. The aim was to show the socio-political and geopolitical construction of the interstate system during the absolutist-dynastic period as a historical outcome, preceding the rise of capitalism.

Third, what effect had the rise of capitalism in early modern England, as set out by Brenner, on British state-formation and grand strategy for the ordering and, ultimately, transformation of pre-capitalist geopolitical relations in the rest of the world? In a sense, 1648 was a casualty of this research program, and not the prime target – partly because it seemed obvious to me that anybody semi-literate in early modern history and peace treaties would not take IR's claims on the Westphalian Settlement's "modernity" seriously – though it turned out that I had underestimated how deeply ingrained this *idée fixe* was in the collective disciplinary mindset. So,*The Myth of 1648* and the subsequent Deutscher Memorial Lecture had a wide reception, inside and outside IR, and inside and outside Marxism.

The response from within the field of IR centered less on these analytical questions – which were more productively taken up from within the Marxist discourse – and more on the revision of the status of 1648. While few quibbled with the empirical veracity of my interpretation of the Settlement, three standard responses emerged, apart from those, very few, that understood my account as a plausible alternative theorization.

The normal tactical move was first to say that while the notion of "Westphalia" was indeed widely accepted as a starting point for modern international relations, it was never meant to be a serious historiographical thesis in IR as a scientific field. The reasoning was that there is no need to worry much about the



specific origins of the interstate order, as history was in IR a secondary concern that can be neglected.

The second answer was that there was some truth to my argumentation but that IR had never really maintained that the modern interstate system fell overnight fully-fledged from the sky, that it was suddenly institutionalized after the Thirty Years' War, so that 1648 was a mere stepping-stone in a much longer and drawn-out gradual process..

The third response, coming often from post-structuralists, was to say maybe you are right, but it is still a myth, a discursive myth, and thus still a powerful performative discourse constitutive not only for the discipline but also for reality to the degree that policy makers more or less use Westphalia as a rhetorical device or performative praxis, so that the idea has taken on a historical efficacy of its own. And in that sense 1648 still needs to be taken seriously. This kind of argument is, of course in a way true – if people start believing in false claims then they become ideology. But this does not really constitute an account of how else to think about Westphalia, especially from a critical point of view.

**How do you now assess the general effects of this work and your historical approach for understanding capitalist international relations? How has it affected the course of your current research?**

Ultimately, the debate over identifying a determinate moment in time – a system-wide tipping-point for the arrival of modern or capitalist interstate relations – leads into an intellectual impasse, charged with teleological assumptions. The historical implication of my research is simply that the search for sudden "systemic" changes across international orders is futile. It grates with the idea of history as a process allergic to system-wide periodizations of clear-cut "befores" and "afters," given different temporalities of development in different regions. It also imputes that we know what "modern" or "capitalist" international relations are supposed to look like, once that imaginary threshold had been crossed. We don't! What does it mean to say this or that is a distinctly capitalist foreign policy, if capitalist foreign policies take on distinct forms in concrete cases? As we know, these can range from defensive postures, to alliance-formations and concert-systems, formal to informal imperialism, attempts to establish distinct regional spheres of influence, as for example institutionalized in the U.S. Monroe Doctrine or fascist *Grossraum*-building, to types of quasi-consensual hegemony, decolonization, or regional integration, as in the case of the EU. Nobody in his or her right mind could deny that capital accumulation is a powerful motive in the foreign policy calculations of capitalist states, but this doesn't tell us much about the specific construction of specific foreign policy strategies, political geographies, and their chances of realization.

The whole point of my argument is less about finding a moment in time where modern or capitalist international relations were enacted, but to think a little bit more about the variability in the construction of foreign policy strat-

egies for the geopolitical management of interstate relations over time, even within a capitalist context. Now, this type of historicism is often quickly dismissed by more positivistically-minded IR theorists who equate IR as a social science with a conception of theory that validates determinisms and generalizations, so that my work is sometimes referred to as belonging more to historiography or to interpretation or to something else. My epistemological strategy is then downplayed and downgraded as something that it is not scientific, maybe constructivist, interpretivist, or hermeneutic or so but considered as being outside the essential field definition of IR – and this comes also from Marxists who assign structural efficacy to capitalism and its expansionary tendencies. But the key point for me is simply to keep demonstrating that it is misleading to center a preconceived and ideal-typified notion of capitalism as being structurally efficacious for international relations in deterministic ways. Rather what we need to do is to constantly historicize and when we do that we will start to see that the link, the mediation between the presence of capitalism and foreign policy formation is very variegated, often indeterminate, not only in terms of foreign policy formation, but also in terms of political geography as such. So, this is to react against the common idea that we have to start from firm axioms or firm expectations derived from capitalism's systemic pressures.

I say that somewhere in the early work of mine where I suggest that from the 17th century onwards capitalism emerged and started to expand, but not as an organic process that could be rigorously theorized. Rather, what we see is an incredible diversity in the construction of foreign policies and spatial orders from the early 18th century onwards up to now. So this formative period is looking obviously very different from the early 19th century after the enactment of the institutional, geographical and practical innovations in international relations – the Concert System and the "Holy Alliance" after the Napoleonic Wars in the Vienna Congress, in which, incidentally, Britain was unable and unwilling to impose anything like the hegemonic designs theorized by Neo-Gramscians in relation to continental Europe; and this looks again very differently from the establishment of the more formalized alliance-systems and power-balancing after the turn of the century in the run-up to World War I. Post-1945 United States hegemony is again a very, very different way to order capitalist interstate relations, then post-9/11 relation, and so on and so forth. We all know this, of course, but Marxists still want to reduce this often to either some essence of capitalism or some stage of capitalism or some other grand explanatory formula. I think the historical record just shows how problematic is to do a shortcut between capitalism, a particular type of foreign policy, and a particular type of geopolitical order. So, in short, I mean the research program that derives from this conception is to do much more detailed work, historiographical work.

What I am doing right now is to look at the Peace Treaty of Utrecht, which sounds again very antiquarian, but this was a big peace settlement, much under-studied in IR, that concluded the Spanish Wars of Succession in 1713 and changed the rules of the game. It is significant for me because Utrecht allows me to draw out the distinctions between the old regime character of 1648 and the first attempt by post-1688 Britain to develop a new and very distinct type of grand strategy, call it capitalist if you want, precisely without promoting capitalism on the Continent. So, after the Glorious Revolution in 1688, Britain starts to make its distinct foreign policy designs felt internationally, enforced and accepted multilaterally at Utrecht. What is innovative here, a point alluded to at the end of my book, but now fleshed out much more clearly, is that Britain developed a new and unique institutional basis for conducting foreign policy, as foreign policy is henceforth answerable to Parliament. This allows for the articulation of foreign policy in terms of a much more sober and secular calculus of the "national interest," no longer connected to the whims of the *Kabinettspolitik* of absolutist rulers. This involves the attempt to re-order European political geography in line with British security interests and, on that new geographical basis, to engage in power balancing to avoid the re-emergence of a continental hegemonic rival.

Power-balancing is therefore not a law of world politics, but a very specific conscious practice – a conscious construction of a grand strategy developed by situated actors. Daniel Baugh wrote in the 1980s a great article on this, showing the emergence of the "blue-water strategy," which had a dual aspect: the establishment of unilateral maritime-commercial supremacy overseas, while being much more defensive in relation to Europe.[6] But this was not a functional outcome of a capitalist constitutional monarchy in which sovereignty lay now with Parliament, but required the construction of a very specific wartime strategy and peace plan contested between the Whigs and the Tories, enacted at Utrecht, and negotiated with other peace parties. So, if you push this kind of work conceptually then you start very quickly to realize that notions like "modern" in international relations do not mean much, they do not give you much, because they imply commonalities, rather than differences. The rise of capitalism in Britain and how this led to new foreign policy ventures and, later, the transformation of European and overseas politics is certainly not a patternless process, but these broad patterns themselves do not give you much in terms of the way that state politicians actually innovate at the foreign policy level. So history is a process – an interactive construction that is the obvious point, the big point that I would like to make against any temptation of relapsing into structural explanations.

**Could you explain how your work shows how Marxist theory, and in particular the Political Marxist notion of "social property relations," can help challenge and redefine some of the core assumptions of IR theory and historical sociology? Do you think that, vice versa, IR can be used to help improving Marxist theory?**

You have to understand that mainstream Anglo-American IR was, until very recently, built on the assumption that theorizing departs from the existence of the

interstate system as a natural given, rather than something that requires explanation in the first place. It posits the political as an autonomous sphere in which states are generically endowed with a unitary rationality and ascribed certain attributes, foremost survival, security, and hence power-maximization. Once these axioms are in place, you can then establish by means of a series of logical deductions how rational state action in a condition of international anarchy leads to certain likely outcomes, including power-balancing, leading to some kind of self-equilibrating systemic logic. This is a nice little exercise in abstract logic, actually modeled, by Kenneth Waltz, in analogy to the workings of the anarchy of competitive markets self-regulated by the invisible hand. It is also said to be grounded in ancient wisdoms – *si vis pacem para bellum* – but bears hardly any relation to reality. So the works of Hans Morgenthau and later of Kenneth Waltz are really premised on drawing an analytical Rubicon between the state and systemic interstate relations and anything that goes on within societies within these states. So the domestic and the social are excised from the remit of what could count as possible influences on statecraft and foreign policy – party politics, business and sector interests, social crises and so on.

This is of course an incredibly narrow, impoverished and ideological way to think about international relations as a social science. More interesting than criticizing these kinds of model-building, which is often peddled as "hard science," is the intellectual genealogy that transposed right-wing and statist Weimar thinking, often through German scholars, to the post-WWII and early Cold War US-American scene, displacing an older "liberal" approach to IR associated with Wilsonianism. Morgenthau, for example, was not only influenced by Max Weber but also by Carl Schmitt's concept of the political, which conceives of the political as an autonomous sphere, activated by "us" versus "them" binaries. This was not so much a reference to Schmitt's definition of sovereignty in terms of who holds the power to declare state emergencies that suspend the routine workings of parliamentary sovereignty in liberal polities, but rather to his infamous idea that a different, purely political, logic kicks in as soon as certain pre-political differences reach a state of intensity that have a potentially lethal antagonistic quality. Apparently, Morgenthau advised Schmitt to insert this idea of "intensification" of non-political issues into his tract on *Der Begriff des Politischen*. So, a conservative and semi-fascist notion of the political, forged in the Weimar situation to quarantine class conflict, was transposed into an altered US context, now characterized by a Cold War logic.

Today, the field of IR is, of course, much richer, especially outside the United States, but it is hard to dislodge the prevalence of Realism, Neo-realism and what is called Neo-liberal Institutionalism – another version of rationalist thinking about strategic state behavior. So, these traditions were directly targeted by my book by bringing historical sociology back.

Historical sociology, in turn, is dominated by Neo-Weberianism and the tautological argument that "war-made-states and states-made-war" – and this is the prevailing consensus as to how the modern state and the interstate system at large emerged in early modern Europe. Many historians use John Brewer's notion of the "fiscal-military state" that rationalizes state structures to procure state revenues to conduct war to say the same thing. Very few people connect these developments with changes in social relations, and, in particular, with how social conflict, in spite of similar military rivalries, diverted trajectories of state-building into differential directions – absolutism, constitutional monarchies, republics, etc. This is why Brenner's work was so seminal for me.

I would, today, stress though, as I said earlier, that I no longer fully subscribe to the concept of "social property relations," at least in the way it is stylized in more rigorous analytical fashion by Brenner. Brenner suggested that property relations generate – almost auto-generate – determinate rules of reproduction on both sides of the class relation, whether in feudal or capitalist "societies." These then lead either to "non-development" in feudal society or "development" in capitalist societies. This was useful to draw the contrast, starkly, between two different sets of social relations for analytical purposes, but this conception also relapses into reifications and rigidities that do not square with the historical record (certainly not for "capitalism") and suppress the "lived agency" of people.

I think that Ellen Wood's seminal *New Left Review* article on "The Separation of the Economic and the Political in Capitalism," when read carefully, points to a different understanding, namely one centered around the socio-political and non-economistic character of capitalism. This was inspired much more by E.P. Thompson's work at the time, and I feel much more comfortable with this historicist, rather than logical-analytical, conception of capitalism. This really leads us back to very fundamental and long-standing controversies that reach right back to Marx's work, when he declares in the preface to *Das Kapital* that it treats "individuals only as personifications of economic categories, the bearers of particular class-relations and interests," rather than as historical actors. To my mind, Brenner's work, at least in the original *Transition Debate*, is theoretically suspended between these two contradictory orientations: class conflict and historicity versus abstract rules of reproduction and dynamics of development and non-development.

Inversely the question is: does Marxism need IR – less the substantial body of IR scholarship, but more the problematic of space and interspatial relations for the Marxist conception of history, for Marxist historiography and social science? I have been saying for a long time that international relations are a big challenge for Marxism, and this, again, goes right back to Marx's own work. Marx never really systematically thought about international relations as a distinct object of inquiry. Of course, we can look at his journalistic writings, notes, and letters, and they are full of interesting insights on this or that contemporary international crisis, though this never crystallized into something that he took seriously, theoretically speaking. He grew more interested in international affairs during the 1850s at the time of the Crimean War, and

wrote extensively on the American Civil War, the "Eastern Question," and India. Kevin Anderson sets this all out nicely in his book. But the tone was set by the *Communist Manifesto*, which is full of lovely metaphors on international issues – and powerful great metaphors – but, here, the key category that is doing all the work is the *world market* or "bourgeois world society." And the world market keeps expanding, but it is expanding basically along transnational lines "creating a world after its own image." Meaning it is, to quote, "not the heavy artillery that is battering down Chinese walls, but the cheap prices of commodities" that force all "barbarian" nations to capitulate and adopt the bourgeois mode of production. And as we all know, of course, that's not true: in each and every case capitalism had to force its way into non-capitalist territories by state force, and normally through war – in this case the Opium Wars and the Unequal Treaties.

So, even where Marx spoke about international relations, fleetingly or in this secondary aspect, he seemed to under-problematize the effect of international relations on the course and development of capitalism. Now, *The Communist Manifesto* and the *German Ideology* belong of course to the early phase of Marx, still very much influenced by Adam Smith, still a very liberal conception, really, of how capitalism basically universalizes in pacific ways due to the growing division of labor, rather than in terms of geopolitics and conflictual changes in property relations. The world market appears as an agency to render multiple regions homogeneous by subjecting them to a common world market logic. So the *Weltmarkt* becomes his mega-subject and this suppresses how world-market pressures are mediated by states, including how affected states and social classes within them respond to the encroachment of market imperatives. How was this process managed geopolitically and how did later developers institutionalize market relations in very different ways?

So the big point is that, as we know, Marx never wrote a distinct tome on either international trade or on war and geopolitics – a tome that would have problematized the spaceless assumptions of either a stagist conception of world history or a universalizing capitalist world market. And in that sense IR – less as a discipline but more as a problematic – remains very pressing and urgent for Marxists to reappropriate, notwithstanding of course the work that was done by the classical theorists of imperialism: V. I. Lenin, Nikolai Bukharin, and to some degree Rosa Luxemburg. But there the problem was that they ended up with a functionalist and instrumentalist account of states, and many people have shown how empirically problematic it was to ground the scramble for Africa and the repartition of the world in the transition from mid-19th century competitive capitalism to turn-of-the-century monopoly capitalism.

So however powerful an intervention theories of imperialism were at the time, I think what really stands out as the most systematic attempt to conceptualize international relations can be found in the anti-Marxist – Neo-Rankean and Neo-Weberian – tradition. While this is, in the end, disappointing, it forces us to open up IR to a much more comprehensive need to rethink and to reclaim it for Marxism.

**Let's return to the work of Carl Schmitt. His thought has received increasing attention from left-wing intellectuals during the past two decades (Chantal Mouffe, Gopal Balakrishnan, Ernesto Laclau). Do you think that the contemporary intellectual and political left should engage with the dilemmas that Carl Schmitt poses? Or is this trend a sign of political defeat?**

Schmitt's work is polyvalent and can be read in multiple ways. I can understand why scholars engage with his analysis and critique of U.S. imperialism, particularly in relation to his acute insights about changes in international law relating to the abolition of classical interstate warfare and its replacement by a discriminatory concept of war, humanitarian pan-interventionism, and conditional forms of liberal sovereignty stretching back to the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations. So, the left can certainly engage with the dilemmas he identified, but I would not recommend the political solutions he prescribed. An abstract re-assertion of the political, organized in sovereign states, or a retreat into partisan-warfare, are clearly not credible and sustainable alternatives for a left progressive politics. A left national populism, feeding on a crude distinction between "them" and "us" may be appropriate for some countries, but not for deeply integrated and small states within Europe. If anything, Schmitt advocated highly authoritarian solutions to social crises in liberal-constitutional states – in his case the Weimar crisis – premised on the invocation of the state of emergency by the state executive, suspending constitutions. Internationally, he argued for the division of the world among four or five great powers, each creating their own regional spheres of influence, what he called *Grossraeume* or pan-regions.

Thus, I was surprised how uncritically he was remobilized during the last decade or so in the Anglo-American literature, including in IR, as an apparently radical and critical thinker. Now, to some degree I can see why that is the case. But there is something like a collective amnesia going on around Schmitt, and non-Germans don't necessarily associate his thought with his role during the Nazi period, how contextually political his work was, and how complicit he was intellectually in launching a blueprint for Nazi foreign policy. His critique of U.S. imperialism does not mean that his politics has much to offer for the left – quite the contrary!

He was not one of the classical geo-politicians, but through first admiring the Monroe Doctrine in the Western hemisphere, and then resisting its inflation to global proportions through Wilsonianism, he provided essentially a template and justification for a German conquest in the East, which he portrayed as being more or less within the normal power-political logic of world history. Victorious powers basically articulate after conquests the rules for international law, so that law follows conquest, generating a "nomos" – a combination of territori-

al sovereignty and law. This may be an accurate, if de-sociologized, description of the relation between law and international power, but do we really want to renege on the possibility of intellectual, rather than just power-political, principles of international law and order?

So I do two things with Schmitt in my work: on the one hand I deconstruct his history of international law and order, as outlined in his *Nomos of the Earth*, and show how the attempt to provide an ideological counter-narrative to liberal stories of international law is actually historically defective and simply not accurate. And secondly, I'm trying to challenge what is a very thin theoretical vocabulary – "concrete order thinking" and his concept of the "political" (the friend/foe distinction) – that is meant to hold and to ground this historical anti-liberal counter-narrative. At the same time, I think it is symptomatic that left thinkers, including Gopal Balakrishnan and Chantal Mouffe and so on, have turned to Schmitt to provide the missing Marxist geopolitics, particularly of the interwar period. So, in that sense, this relates back to my earlier point: because IR is still a relative absence in the Marxist literature, people are groping around to find concepts, to find stories that could help us to make sense of the crisis of law and international order from the late 19th century onwards, through the Thirty Years Crisis, and into the 20th and early 21stcentury without having fully explored the intellectual architecture of Schmitt's thought as a whole. Strange bedfellows indeed!

What I hope to have done is to show how misguided and how problematic it is to use Schmittian categories and tack them onto notions of capitalism and class conflict. Particularly because Schmitt conceived himself from the start as a decidedly anti-sociological thinker, and this connects him much more with the realist and authoritarian tradition than with anything else. Just remind yourself that his definition of sovereignty derives from political theology, the papal *plenitudo potestatis* and absolutism, and validates executive power as something outside and above social conflicts and social struggles. So he is attempting to isolate and insulate politics and the political from any form of social contestation and accountability. Sovereign is he who decides over the state of exception. And the invocation of his concept of the political revolves around a crude notion of volkish homogeneity driven by an existentialized politics of fear designed to drown out sociological fault-lines within socio-politically heterogeneous and class-conflict riven civil societies.

How that can be compatible with Marxism – either theoretically or politically – requires a big leap of faith because the minimum that you have to think about in relation to sovereignty is two things: first, sovereignty is a social relation. This may sound broad, but anybody who is invoking the state of exception has to have thought prior to its declaration about its likely chances of implementation. What is the social situation on the ground? What kind of resources do we actually have in place – military, political, administrative – to implement that state of exception? The state of exception is always a deeply socialized relation, quite the contrary of what Schmitt was trying to argue. Secondly, what kind of crisis calls forth the likelihood of emergency powers? Since political theology is not interested in an explanation of crisis, in contrast to historical sociology or political economy, Schmittian thinking does not provide the categories to understand socio-political crises – thus the crude relapse into an abstract notion of "the political": primitive group-thinking of "them" versus "us." And of course in relation to territorial conquests – land grabs – again, Schmitt held to a deeply de-socialized affirmation of a realist logic of geo-political dynamics and powers that are consciously dissociated from everything that is going on within societies. States, by nature, he insisted, expand and compete for space! So whether you go back to the discoveries of 1492 or the late 19th century period of imperial rivalry, Schmitt would always read this as an affirmation of the law of the stronger. That this is simply what states do: self-preservation through expansion, creating a nomos, rather than a cosmos or a logos.

So I keep being surprised about attempts to reappropriate particularly the historical Schmitt but also the conceptual and political Schmitt by Marxists. To me, that's a*cul-de-sac* – intellectually and politically, it's self-defeating. Yes, it is uncanny how the contemporary situation resembles the interwar crisis and Schmitt's Weimar situation. We have a massive capitalist crisis on our hands with right-wing nationalist forces in most EU countries, absorbing social discontent, and a collapsing liberal center. To advocate in this scenario, as Steffan Wyn-Jones reminded me, a left-wing populism and nationalism that often overlaps with right-wing political recipes – even finding a temporary, if ambiguous, common ground (whether Golden Dawn in Greece, AfD in Germany, the Front National in France, or UKIP in Britain) – by invoking Schmitt seems to me disastrous. After all, National Socialism thrived on the same amalgamation of left and right motives and constituencies during its rise to power, before any dreams of populist socialism were ended in the "night of the long knives" once the Nazis were in power. It may be naïve, but a broad-based transnational alliance of progressive forces seems to me the only remotely acceptable and realistic way forward.

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